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AUTHOR Gillam, Marshall R.
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ABSTRACT

The Indian Teacher Training Project in Secondary Social Science Education (University of Georgia) was funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for 2 years (August 1971--June 1973) to train American Indian students as social science educators to teach Indian students. These students, recruited from the Southeastern and Southwestern United States, transfered to the university to complete their junior and senior years. Maximum enrollment in the project was 16. In June and August of 1973, 11 students completed academic training and graduated; 3 failed to maintain the university's academic standard; 1 resigned for personal reasons; and 1 joined another Indian Teacher Training Project. The program was divided into: academic training, professional training, internship teaching, and community involvement. Training was done on the university campus, in two Indian schools and one public school system. This paper presents an overview of the program and some implications for its continuation. Principle questions considered relate to the degree of "Indianness" among the Indian student teachers, the differences between Indian student teachers in Indian and non-Indian schools, and the advisability of developing or continuing special programs for Indians as prospective teachers of Indian children. (NQ)

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Marshall R. Gillam, Instructor
Social Sciences and History
Toccoa Falls Academy
Toccoa Falls, Georgia

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AMERICAN INDIANS AS STUDENT TEACHERS

by

Marshall R. Gillam, Instructor
Social Sciences and History
Toccoa Falls Academy

The research on which this paper is based was an outgrowth of the investigator's association with the Indian Teacher Training Project in Secondary Social Science Education at the University of Georgia. The project was funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, for a two year period beginning in August, 1971, and concluding in June, 1973. The purpose was to train students of American Indian origin as social science educators to teach Indian students. American Indian students were recruited from the Southeastern and Southwestern United States. These students transfered to the University of Georgia to complete their junior and senior years. The maximum enrollment of Indian students in the project was sixteen, two of whom were alternates who were invited to fill vacancies created by the departure of students from the program. Eleven students completed all academic training and graduated from the program in June and August of 1973. Three students failed to maintain the academic standard of the University of Georgia; one resigned for personal reasons; and one was recruited to join another Indian Teacher Training Project.

The program was divided into four strands: academic training, professional training, internship teaching, and community involvement. The academic training strand of the program called for four

quarters of academic work on the campus of the University of Georgia in Athens. The courses taken in this strand of the program emphasized social sciences and history. The courses taken during the first two quarters were scheduled so that several Indian students were in each class. Project tutors were able to work with the trainees in groups to provide assistance with academic work. Considerable dissatisfaction resulted from the tutorial policy; therefore, the policy was discontinued during the two remaining quarters except for assistance which was given on a request basis.

The professional training in the program was not conducted through the regular instructional program in the College of Education. This strand was developed by the project director, several members of the Social Science Education faculty, a Professor of Educational Psychology, and the graduate students who constituted the project staff. The professional training work was divided into instructional modules. Each module was under the direction of a faculty member who was assisted by a project staff member. The modules were sequentially presented and each included performance objectives which were evaluated during the internship teaching segment of the program. The early modules presented the Indian students with basic mechanics in the teaching process. After the students had acquired some teaching experience, other modules were introduced which presented more complex and innovative teaching strategies.

The internship teaching strand of the program was implemented in two Indian schools and one public school system. Each student participated in three quarters of student teaching. The Choctaw

Schools of Pearl River, Mississippi, and the Cherokee Schools of Cherokee, North Carolina, served as the Indian schools in which the first two internships were conducted. The total group of trainees was divided between the two sites with a graduate student who served as the training supervisor assigned to each site. During the second internship, the training supervisors remained in the same location and the students were rotated between sites. Each student taught at both the elementary and secondary levels during each of the first two internships. The final internship was conducted in the public schools of Stephens County, Georgia. All of the trainees taught in the same county and each was able to teach at the level of his or her preference - elementary, junior high school, or senior high school. All internship teaching was done under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher and the training supervisor who was assigned to that location.

The final strand of the program was community involvement. Numerous studies (Havinghurst, 1970, King, 1967, Richburg, 1972) have reported that one of the problems with teachers of Indian students has been that they live away from the Indian communities and remain in the school only long enough to complete their responsibilities. These teachers rarely, if ever, visit in the homes of their pupils or become interested in any aspect of the lives of their students. The community involvement strand of the program was intended to reverse this tendency. The staff members felt that the student teachers would be accepted in the school and community if they became involved in activities in which other

members of the community were involved. It was felt that this would be most effective if these activities were not related to the school. This strand of the program was implemented most effectively in the two Indian schools. Housing and transportation arrangements made community involvement quite difficult during the third internship.

Teacher Training for Culturally Different Students

The literature of teacher training for the culturally different reflects that relatively little research has been done to improve understandings about cultural differences and the implications of cultural differences for education. A considerable body of literature has grown up which purportedly describes the culturally different student and analyses the problems which are faced by the schools and the culturally different students who attend them. McLendon (1970) reported that most of the research in the past decade has either not been aimed at an analysis of teacher behaviors or has not reported any analysis of teacher behaviors with respect to teaching the culturally different. McLendon found that the only discussion of teachers and the culturally different had to do with the introduction of special curriculum materials and not with the development of special skills for working with culturally different students.

Teacher training for Indian students has been considered in the tradition of education for the culturally different. Coombs (1970) reported in his study, The Educational Disadvantage of the Indian American Student, that the American Indian student is disadvantaged

in terms of the typical school situation and is becoming an increasingly apparent problem. Coombs, nevertheless, reported that there have been some significant changes in educational patterns among American Indian students. More Indian students are now in school than during the 1950's. The mean number of years in school has increased from 7.6 to 8.4. The total number of high school graduates has increased by 33,000, an increase of 40 percent. At the same time, Indian students are significantly behind the general public in school achievement. The longer an Indian student remains in school the further he drops behind national averages in general school achievement. Consequently, there is an extremely high drop-out rate among Indian students. As students reach the legal age to leave school, they leave in large numbers. Coombs suggested that one of the central reasons for the poor school attendance and apparently low achievement records is that the schools represent one culture and the students another. Until this discrepancy is resolved, Indians will continue to have problems in school.

Coombs reported relatively little about the problems of teachers of Indian students whose culture is different from their students. Some Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools provide new teachers with orientations but such sessions are viewed as generally ineffective (e.g. Benham, 1969). A small body of literature has grown up which attempts to apply educational information to the problems of teaching the culturally different, especially the American Indian. Zintz (1969), Wax, et. al. (1971), and Burger (1968) have made some significant contributions

in this area. The limitations in their work are important. Zintz emphasized three specific groups: Navaho, Pueblo, and Spanish-Americans. His entire presentation concentrated on the special problems of these three groups. Wax (1971) presented a much broader approach to the problems of education across cultural lines. There was relatively little which dealt specifically with applications for the teacher. Burger presented his own approach to a new sub-discipline which he called "ethno-pedagogy". This discipline was to be based on an application of anthropological knowledge to educational problems. Rather than describing new approaches for teachers of American Indian students, Burger presented some methods for adapting traditional teaching strategies to the problems of educating Indian students. His small manual is only a preliminary step in the direction of coming to grips with the problem.

In all of the literature, relatively little attention is paid to the possibility of using Indian teachers for Indian students. The present movement toward "Indianization" of Indian affairs may redirect some attention to this possibility. While tribal languages and cultural patterns differ, it is possible that Indian teachers of Indian students could provide a useful model which would instill an incentive to achieve in the school environment. The training of such teachers is totally ignored in the literature. No mention is made of the development of programs for the training of Indians as teachers of Indians. Consequently, there is no evidence about the effectiveness of such training programs or the Indians who might serve as student teachers in

training.

Indian Student Teachers

The first question which comes to mind when discussing the matter of Indian student teachers is "How Indian are the Indian Student Teachers?" The following comments pertain to one half of the students in the Indian Teacher Training Project. These students were observed as they practice taught in the Cherokee Indian Schools during the second internship teaching experience and in the public schools of Stephens County, Georgia, during the third teaching internship.

Two of the six students had received elementary and/or secondary education in BIA schools. The other four students were educated in public schools. Most of those educated in public schools had Indian schoolmates with whom they associated. Of the three students who were full-bloods, two were among those educated in BIA schools and the same two were the only students who spoke the language of their tribe.

All of the student teachers, except the one North Carolina Cherokee, had to establish their identity as Indians with the schools students in Cherokee. Two of the other students were Western Cherokee and three were non-Cherokee. The tribal differences had no apparent influence on the relationships which the student teachers developed with the students in the school. Since relatively few of the Cherokee students can still speak the Cherokee Language, there was no language barrier on the part of the student teachers. In fact, the North Carolina Cherokee,

who was fluent in the Cherokee language, had very few opportunities to utilize her knowledge of the language in her relationships with students. On one occasion the training supervisor observed a class in world geography composed primarily of tenth grade students. In the lesson, the student teacher attempted to illustrate a point of difference in language dialects in Germany by using differences in Cherokee language dialects. When she attempted to elicit responses from the students on various Cherokee words, she received only embarassed giggles. The students apparently knew few words and were unwilling to divulge them. In this instance, a common culture and knowledge of the tribal language did not appear to be a real asset in developing better communication or rapport with the students.

The role of the Indian student teacher in Stephens County was somewhat different from that in Cherokee. In the High School, the students knew that they would be having Indian student teachers, but the arrival of the student teachers caused no apparent disruption. As one of the teachers commented to the training supervisor, "Some of my students are more Indian than these student teachers." At the elementary and junior high level, the novelty of having a "real live Indian" in the classroom was more apparent. One of the student teachers was in an elementary school which had no Black teachers and only a few Black students. In this situation she appeared to assume the role of minority person in residence. Many of the students were quite ignorant of matters pertaining to Indians. Their questions were frequently blunt and discourteous. In the initial stages of the internship, the student teacher was

quite discouraged with the whole situation. Her spirits improved as the students became better acquainted with her and she with them. As the quarter progressed, her working relationship with the students improved and they seemed to think of her less as an Indian and more as a teacher. Her relationships with the professional staff at the same time were quite positive.

Another of the student teachers worked in a school which was predominately Black. Most of her classes were more than 50% Black and the school had several Black teachers. The uniqueness of her presence quickly diminished when her competence became established in the classroom. The students readily identified with her. Unfortunately, the evidence on her work was not discriminating enough to differentiate whether the students accepted her because of her youth or because of her minority status.

Another student teacher worked in a small elementary school which housed fifth and sixth grades in one room. She was readily accepted by her students but one incident suggests that she was not thought of as an Indian. A social studies lesson was aimed at making the students aware of the tendency to fear things which are different only because they are not understood. One of the students pointed out that there was a Spanish girl in the class who was a good illustration of that point, since the students did not understand her language or cultural customs. None of the students had suggested that the Indian student teacher was also a good illustration of the point since her cultural background would presumably make her different from the others in the class.

Each of these isolated incidents helps to formulate a picture of the attitudes held by the school students about the "Indianness" of the Indian student teachers. The students in the Indian school accepted all of the student teachers as Indians although several of the student teachers had few of the physical or cultural characteristics which are commonly associated with the Indian stereotype. The students in the public schools reacted in two ways: the high school students showed only mild curiosity, while the students in the elementary and junior high schools showed intense curiosity and excitement about having an Indian student teacher. The local paper carried the same sentiment with a lead article on the front page of one edition: "As Student Teachers, ELEVEN 'REAL' INDIANS JOIN STEPHENS INDIANS." (Ironically, the nickname of the county high school is the Stephens County Indians.) As the quarter progressed, most indications that the students identified their new student teachers as Indians disappeared. As the student teachers established themselves in the classroom, their students began to think of them less as Indians and more as student teachers. By the end of the quarter, student conversation gave little evidence that the student teachers were considered Indians any longer.

Indians as Social Studies Teachers

The Indian Teacher Training Project was especially interested in preparing Indian social studies teachers. Teaching field preparation led to a comparison of the Indian student teachers with other practicing social studies teachers. The research which

was associated with the Indian Teacher Training Project did not examine this phase of the project, but certain observations were made on the basis of contact with the teachers and limited observations in the classroom. Unfortunately, several limitations precluded any detailed analysis of this aspect of the research. There were no other student teachers in social studies with whom to compare the Indian student teachers, since those in the project were the only student teachers working in the schools at that time. Comparisons with experienced teachers are of only limited benefit since practicing teachers have the advantage of experience. Finally, observation of teaching activity of the regular classroom teachers was limited because the student teachers were doing most of the teaching during the teaching internships. Some observations were made and the following reflections are based on those observations.

The Indian student teachers made very quick judgments about the quality of teaching they found both in Cherokee and Stephens County. In the first and second days of each internship, they reported that they did not feel that the teachers in the classrooms were very good. They were consistently critical of the techniques employed and the manner in which the classrooms were conducted. As each teaching internship progressed, it was interesting to note the extent to which each student teacher began to emulate the teaching styles and educational philosophy of the classroom teacher with whom he worked. Teacher criticism of reading ability and student motivation was especially prevalent in Cherokee. Most of the student teachers dismissed this information during the early

days of the internship. In later weeks, most of the trainees began to complain that the students could not read and that they had no real interest in school work.

The student teachers had had several quarters of instruction in teaching methods by the beginning of the second teaching internship. They employed these techniques only a few times during the second and third internships. They generally followed the pattern that had been established by the classroom teacher with whom they worked. In some instances, they reported that the classroom teacher wanted the work done in a particular way which made innovation impractical. At other times, it appeared that the student teachers found a comfortable rut and settled into it just as they accused the regular teachers of doing.

There were occasional high points when the student teachers attempted innovative teaching strategies and were able to enjoy a degree of success. At such times, the student teachers demonstrated that they had the ability to convey conceptually organized materials in a meaningful way. Unfortunately, they did not function at this level on a regular basis. The most striking characteristic was the readiness with which they accepted the performance of their classroom teacher as a status quo with which they could be satisfied.

School - Community Variations

The two teaching internships took place in different communities and under different circumstances. Similarities and differences in student teacher performance became an important

variable. The student teachers assumed an involved role while working in Cherokee because they felt that they were beginning to work with "my people", and they showed a keen interest in getting to know the students and helping them both in and out of school. The students, in return, talked with their student teachers quite freely. It was not uncommon to see students and student teachers involved in conversations in the halls and in the dining room. Interaction between students and student teachers was much less common after the school day was over. Two of the interns retreated to their living quarters and rarely associated with students after school unless there was an athletic contest. The trainee who lived at home usually went directly there, and did not reappear until next school day. The other three interns spent more time with their students, and were especially active in going places and doing things with the elementary students. There was a very definite rapport based on the common bond "Indianness" although the outward manifestation of this bond was sometimes missing.

The situation in the non-Indian public school was somewhat different. In the first place, the students were assigned to several schools in the county. Few of the students lived near the student teachers who lived in the community. The distance variable was compounded by the fact that most of the trainees did not have access to cars. Three of the six trainees lived more than 50 miles from the internship schools and usually left for home immediately at the end of the school day. There was less comment about interest in the students or in working with them at any other

time than during school hours. In fact, most of the student teachers who did live in the community left the school for home as quickly as possible after the end of the day. Contacts with students outside the school day were minimal at best. Only one or two isolated instances of contact with students outside the school day were reported.

In-school performances varied only slightly between the two locations. The student teachers appeared to approach their work with the same professional manner whether they were teaching Indians or non-Indians. They maintained good working rapport with the students in their classes and with the school teachers and staff members in the internship schools.

The variable of staff relationships showed some differences between the two internship sites. In the Indian school, the staff considered the Indian student teachers to be Indians. They were more tolerant of their behavior and less concerned about mistakes or problems in the classroom. The teaching staff accepted the presence of Indian student teachers as though it were a regular part of their job in the Indian school. The teaching staff had lower expectations of the students in their classes and, consequently, were less concerned when the student teachers did less than adequate instructional jobs.

The teachers in the public schools were much more sensitive to the performance of their students. They did not, generally, accept the low performance standards that were common in the Indian schools. This difference in teacher expectations brought about some tension in working relationships when the student

teacher performed at a level that did not meet the expectations of the classroom teacher. On some occasions student teachers attempted to implement teaching strategies that either departed seriously from what the regular teacher preferred or attempted to conduct a lesson which was not successful. At such times, it was common for the classroom teacher to complain to the training supervisor and/or the student teacher about the classroom activities and to insist that instructional activities of a more meaningful nature take place.

Several aspects of the public school experience introduced new challenges to the Indian student teachers. Many of the students in the Indian schools had reading and/or learning disabilities. This condition was less common in the public school. Consequently, the public school students were more challenging to the student teacher and active as learners. This substantially increased the instruction burden of the student teacher in most instances. Class discussions were also different, especially at the secondary level. The Indian students were generally reluctant to become engaged in classroom discussions, and the student teachers were frequently frustrated in their attempts to involve Indian students in the types of discussion that the modules in teaching methods had advocated. The public school students, on the other hand, participated very actively in discussions. The instructional problem then became one of controlling and directing discussion - not of stimulating it. The trainee who worked at the junior high school level was especially affected by the differential

levels of student performance. Self-confidence and content competence were both limited, and she was frequently caught by students who were either more knowledgeable or more able discussants.

The basic plan of school organization differed little between the two internship sites. The elementary school at Cherokee used a modified plan of departmental organization whereas elementary schools of Stephens County were completely departmentalized in the upper grades, except for one school which had six grades in three rooms. Both the Indian and the Public senior and junior high schools were departmentalized. The student teachers taught only social studies subjects in both situations. The only difference was that the social studies department was organized on a modified team basis at Cherokee and the classes were taught by individual teachers in Stephens County. There were few differences in curriculum in the elementary schools. The significant difference in curriculum at the high school level came from the fact that the public high school was much larger and could offer a number of electives that the Indian school could not offer because of its smaller size. The only instruction in Indian history and culture which took place in the Indian school was a unit prepared and taught by the Indian student teachers. No such elective was available for the public school students, but the Indian student teachers frequently injected Indian studies into their class work. This was usually accepted without any problem by both the students and the classroom teachers.

An Indian Teacher Training Program

When a program such as the Indian Teacher Training Project is proposed, the inevitable quest is "What is the necessity of such a program?" Is there any real purpose or utility in training American Indians to teach American Indians differently than other prospective teachers? The Indian Teacher Training Project did not depart from most of the traditional emphases in teacher training. The instructional format was somewhat modified with the introduction of the modular concept, but the modules were essentially units of instruction and not highly innovative departures in teacher training. There was little, if any, attempt to deal with the Indian student teachers in significantly different ways than other student teachers at the College of Education, University of Georgia. The only radical departure was that the Indian student teachers had three internship teaching experiences as opposed to the one which is normally taken.

These comments still do not respond to the question of the necessity of a specialized program for Indian student teachers and after having participated for two years in a special program to train Indian teachers, this investigator would conclude that there is no real need for special programs to train Indian teachers. Two problems must be discussed briefly: training Indians as teachers, and training Indians as teachers of Indians.

American Indian students at the college level are little different than other students at the college level. If th[illegible] have had adequate educational backgrounds, they are equipped to

pursue a college education. If they have not had adequate educational preparation, they will most likely have the same difficulties that any other poorly prepared student would encounter. Cultural differences between American Indian college students and the dominant culture have either diminished or the student has learned to live with a foot in both societies. The schools in which the American Indian teacher will work (presuming that they are Indian schools)will not attempt to encluturate the student in the ways of his tribe. Rather, they will attempt to prepare the student to exist or excel in the dominant culture. In this situation, an American Indian teacher who has become proficient in both cultures would probably be the most effective teacher and model for Indian children.

The question of training American Indians as teachers of Indians is also an important consideration. In conjunction with this question, it is also important to raise a question about the differences between Indian children and other children which would necessitate different teaching techniques. The student teachers in the Indian Teacher Training Project occasionally challenged the training staff that they were being taught "White" teaching methods and not "Indian" methods. When the staff raised a question about the differences between Indians as learners and non-Indians as learners, they were usually met with silence. Fundamental techniques of teaching (e.g. planning lessons, behavioral objectives, content competence, and evaluation) are applicable to all teaching situations and the necessary modifica-

tions must be made by competent teachers in on site situations. No two schools or communities are exactly similar and a teacher must always be prepared to modify his procedures to accomodate these variations in the clientele with whom he works. The prospective Indian teacher of Indian students must be equipped with the best possible teaching tools and must be sensitive to the variations within his classroom. Indian tribes, other minority groups, and middle class learners all come to the classroom with differences that suggest teacher specialization in a multiplicity of fields. Such educational experience for teachers is neither feasible nor desirable. Prospective teachers of Indian students, whether they be Indian or white, can profit most from a thorough preparation in the techniques and skills of teaching, a sound knowledge of educational psychology and learning theory, and a sensitivity to individuals which will accomodate any cultural differences which are present.

Summary

This paper has presented an overview of an Indian Teacher Training program and some implications for the continuation of such programs. The literature of teachers and student teachers for Indian students is decidedly limited and reflects no efforts to study Indian student teachers who have practice taught with both Indian and non-Indian students.

Principle questions under consideration related to the degree of "Indianness" found among the Indian student teachers,

the differences between Indian student teachers in Indian and non-Indian schools, and the advisability of developing or continuing special programs for Indians as prospective teachers of Indian children.

While the Indian student teachers in the special program on ~~which this paper was based~~ had successful experiences in the University and the internship schools, there is little justification for training Indian teachers in this manner in the future.

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